

SELF-CARE DURING COVID-19

It's normal to experience anxiety and fear, especially during a global pandemic. However, it's important to recognize triggers that can lead to pain flare-ups and learn how to manage them. Triggers can amplify negative emotions like fear and anxiety, which in turn can worsen the pain.

Having a plan in place ahead of time can be helpful if you do experience a pain flare-up. Taking action to prevent and address flare-ups can impact:

- How often you have a flare-up
- How long the flare-up lasts
- How severe the flare-up is

TIPS TO PREVENT FLARE-UPS

When preparing for a flare-up, it's important to have your essential pain management tools (e.g., a heating pad, extra medication) easily accessible. Placing the essentials together (e.g., in a small box) will make it easier for you to access them if a flare-up occurs.

Additional tips that can help manage flare-ups include:

- Increasing the number of rest periods you take in a day (rather than the length of rest)
- Remembering that tension can increase pain; try to stay positive
- Setting yourself some simple goals (e.g., short walks, gentle stretches, breathing exercises, etc.)
- Doing gentle exercises or movements (start easy, build slowly)
- Using whatever you know will help you (e.g., heat, ice, pain medication)
- Stopping activities that aggravate pain or cause tension for a short while
- Wearing comfortable clothes that are easy to put on
- Monitoring your medication – small doses at regular intervals; remember that medication is more effective if taken at the start of a flare-up
- Returning to baseline activities gradually but as soon as possible

When the flare-up is over, review your plan, analyze which aspects were most effective for you and adjust as necessary.

MANAGING FEAR, ANXIETY AND NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

In addition to having a plan for managing flare-ups, here are some ways you can try to manage fear, anxiety or other negative thoughts:

- Doing breathing exercises
- Taking breaks when necessary (e.g., take a short walk, meditate)
- Increasing exercise with gentle movements
- Reaching out to friends and family in ways that respect physical distancing guidelines (e.g., a phone or video call, an outdoor hangout, etc.)

RESOURCES

- [Pain BC's Gentle Movement @ Home series for people living with pain](#)
- [LivePlanBe section on mind-body techniques](#)
- [Can a depressive mood contribute to pain sensitivity?](#)
- [Six ways to quickly change a negative mood into a positive one](#)
- [Helpful thinking](#)
- [The power of language in chronic pain self-management](#)